CD/1213
12 August 1993

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

LETTER DATED 10 AUGUST 1993 FROM THE ACTING REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT TRANSMITTING A STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION RELATING TO UKRAINE'S POLICY CONCERNING NUCLEAR WEAPONS LOCATED ON ITS TERRITORY

I have the honour to transmit the attached statement by the Government of the Russian Federation relating to Ukraine's policy concerning nuclear weapons located on its territory.

I would be very grateful if this text could be issued as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament and distributed to delegations both of member States and of non-member States participating in the work of the Conference.

(Signed): V. Zemskov
Acting Representative of the
Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation
to the Conference on Disarmament

Statement by the Government of the Russian Federation

Recently, Kiev has taken a number of steps towards the establishment of control over the nuclear weapons which remain on Ukrainian territory. On 2 July 1993 the Ukrainian Parliament approved "Guidelines for the Foreign Policy of Ukraine", declaring Ukraine to be the owner of these weapons. This move by the Parliament has been supported in subsequent public declarations by the Ukrainian leadership. The Ministry of Defence of Ukraine has decided to incorporate the troops responsible for the storage and maintenance of nuclear warheads into the 43rd Missile Army under its command. This gives Ukraine direct control over nuclear armaments.

In this connection, the Government of the Russian Federation considers it necessary to state the following.

Such a policy pursued by Kiev, causing concern in the entire world community, could have very serious consequences for international stability and security and for the whole system of international relations.

In declaring itself the owner of nuclear weapons, Ukraine is violating the international obligations it assumed concerning its non-nuclear status, thus openly challenging the international order, and introducing legal nihilism into international relations.

Kiev is in direct breach of a number of agreements concluded within the framework of the Commonwealth of Independent States, in particular the decision by the Heads of States of CIS on 6 July 1992 that among the successor States to the USSR, the Russian Federation alone would be a nuclear-weapon State.

It is also in breach of the Lisbon Protocol to the START I Treaty, under which Ukraine took the obligation to accede at the earliest possible time to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State. The written declaration of the Ukrainian Party on the occasion of the signature of this Protocol says that: "... The right and the burden of owning nuclear armaments of the former USSR is left, with the explicit consent of Ukraine and other successor States to the former USSR, to the Russian Federation alone".

Nor is Kiev's policy compatible with Ukraine's commitment to the withdrawal from its territory, by the end of 1994, of nuclear weapons for dismantling and destruction.

Ukraine is undermining the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime based on the 1968 Treaty while endangering the Treaty itself, the fate of which will be decided at a conference in 1995. A dangerous precedent is being created; it may be used by countries now on the verge of possessing nuclear weapons.

The results of years of effort by the international community to achieve nuclear disarmament, notably the START I and START II treaties, are being torpedoed.

Since Ukraine does not have the requisite physical and technological capacity, its taking control of nuclear weapons considerably increases nuclear and environmental risks, and for this Ukraine must bear the entire responsibility.

The Russian Federation, as the only successor to the USSR where possession of nuclear weapons is concerned and as a depositary of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, cannot accept as legal any claims or actions that run counter to the international agreements on the preservation and enhancement of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We urge Ukraine to do everything possible to ensure strict respect of its non-nuclear status under international agreements, and to reconsider the above-mentioned decisions by the Parliament and the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine taking control of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, the Russian Federation expresses its readiness to continue cooperation with Ukraine in ensuring the nuclear and environmental security of nuclear weapons on the basis of the provisions set forth in the Message of 30 April 1993 from the President of Russia, Mr. B.N. Yeltsin, to the President of Ukraine.

Moscow, 5 August 1993

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